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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 NEW DELHI 001836

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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR MEETS MEA STATE MINISTER SHASHI THAROOR

Classified By: Ambassador Tim Roemer for reasons 1.4 (B,D)

11. (C) SUMMARY: In an August 28 meeting with Ambassador Roemer, Minister of State for External Affairs Shashi Tharoor asked the U.S. to weigh in with Pakistan on cross-border terrorism and to stay the course in Afghanistan. He indicated that there is room for the U.S. and India to cooperate more in Afghanistan, where India could "deliver U.S. objectives" if the U.S. would discreetly facilitate such cooperation. Tharoor suggested that there is also room for increased cooperation on nonproliferation issues, but that the U.S. must understand India's position on the NPT. On increased UN coordination and cooperation on climate change, Tharoor predicted we would see a move away from Non-Aligned Movement rhetoric over time. He was optimistic about finding areas of common interest at Copenhagen but urged the U.S. not to lump India with China when discussing climate change. END SUMMARY.

Increased Security Cooperation post 26/11

12. (C) Ambassador Roemer met with Minister of State for External Affairs Shashi Tharoor at his MEA office on August 128. Turning first to security cooperation, Tharoor exhorted the U.S. to be a source of sound advice to Pakistan on what is needed to bring those responsible for the Mumbai attacks to justice and roll up the terrorist infrastructure. It will not be enough, post 26/11, to make scapegoats of five or six individuals now being "fitfully" prosecuted, said Tharoor.

13. (C) Ambassador Roemer stressed that the U.S. is looking for ways to strengthen border security, law enforcement and counterterrorism cooperation, building on the FBI's work in the Mumbai trial. Home Minister Chidambaram's visit was an opportunity to bolster joint efforts. The Strategic Dialogue meeting with Prime Minister Singh in November would be a good opportunity to announce a new array of cooperative ventures.

14. (C) Tharoor said all this was "music to our ears," but added that the U.S. might be perceived as indifferent to India's troubles in the face of "bigger fish to fry" on Pakistan's western border with Afghanistan. He appreciated the Ambassador's reassurances on this count but pointed out that India needs to hear the message on other levels, too. He also stressed that the GOI had much to do on the counterterrorism front. Tharoor mentioned that he had met

the day before with the Kochin port director and discovered that, while Kochin is planning to bring its largest container terminal on line in January, there is no plan in place to prevent attacks on it; India needs training in order to be effective where nonproliferation and security considerations intersect, concluded Tharoor.

Afghanistan: With U.S. Facilitation, India Could Deliver

15. (C) Ambassador Roemer expressed gratitude for India's positive contributions in Afghanistan. Tharoor said that India is proud of its contributions and deeply committed to its work in Afghanistan, and recognizes that it can carry out certain projects there more easily than the U.S. can. If the U.S. could discreetly facilitate that work, he said, India could "deliver many U.S. objectives without putting a U.S. face on them." He wondered, however, how long the U.S. would remain engaged in Afghanistan, especially in light of recent polls indicating that most Americans are not in favor of staying on. The Ambassador reassured Tharoor of President Obama's long-term commitment to Afghanistan and the articulation of the Obama Administration's new strategy announced on March 27.

Non-Proliferation: Room for Cooperation if U.S. Can Understand India

16. (C) On nonproliferation both agreed that beyond the clear differences there is much room for cooperation. Tharoor argued that India's three-strand approach to nonproliferation

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was not adequately understood in Washington: India has a long-standing, moral commitment to disarmament but fundamentally rejects the basic assumptions of the Nonproliferation Treaty, and because of India's "tough neighborhood," the GOI is convinced it would be foolish and irresponsible not to maintain credible deterrence. India shares a commitment to a world free of nuclear weapons but considers that the five powers under the NPT have not made enough progress toward that goal and, in any event, the NPT system creates an unacceptable apartheid system. India will not disarm if no one else moves forward. Ambassador Roemer mentioned Rajiv Gandhi's views and contributions on nonproliferation and inquired about common ground today.

17. (C) Tharoor pointed out that India has an "impeccable" record on not proliferating nuclear technology. The Bush administration recognized India's track record, said Tharoor, but the Obama administration does not seem to have done so. Tharoor stressed the risks PM Singh had taken in India's IAEA votes on Iran; India does not want more nuclear neighbors. This should have sent a strong message to Washington.

18. (C) Acknowledging that the U.S. and India have had different approaches on nonproliferation and disarmament, Ambassador Roemer suggested that the U.S. and India could find areas for cooperation, like the Proliferation Security Initiative or the Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty. He thanked Tharoor for the GOI's recent positive actions, such as its effective handling of a suspicious North Korean ship earlier in August, and expressed hope that Special Advisor for Nonproliferation and Arms Control Bob Einhorn and Under Secretary for Arms Control Ellen Tauscher could soon visit India to help find common ground. Tharoor assured the Ambassador that the U.S. will find receptiveness on these issues if discussions are framed with a clear understanding of India's red-lines.

United Nations Cooperation

19. (C) Ambassador Roemer asked Tharoor why India and the U.S. so rarely manage to coordinate effectively at the UN despite the significant improvement in bilateral ties. Tharoor explained that there is an attitudinal transition going on in the Indian system, but that bureaucrats remain reluctant to

abandon established positions. He mentioned that he had personally spoken with the Prime Minister, the External Affairs Minister, and the Foreign Secretary about areas where India should reexamine its positions. There must also be better cooperation in New York, he pointed out, adding that India's UN Ambassador had recently hosted U.S. Ambassador to the UN Susan Rice for lunch as an initiative to reach out at her level.

¶10. (C) Tharoor emphasized that there was no fundamental disagreement on UN cooperation. Democracy, he said, is "an important calling card for India in the world" that balances its colonial past. There is no need for India to be shy about this or to stick with its Non-Aligned Movement attitudes forever, said Tharoor, but it will take time to change views. He did believe there was positive momentum and interest in some changes.

Climate Change: Changes on the Horizon

¶11. (C) Along the lines of seeking common ground on U.N. issues, the Ambassador pushed Tharoor to "think aloud" about where we could work together on climate change and energy security. Tharoor stated that the rhetoric surrounding the issue must change, and highlighted that PM Singh wants India to be part of the solution, especially because India is among the biggest victims. Tharoor was confident that such a change of rhetoric is coming and emphasized that "we must move away from demonizing each other," adding that India will stop accusing the U.S. of not doing its share, but the U.S. needs to stop lumping India with China. India is not in the

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same league in terms of per capita emissions or total energy use, yet India is now portrayed as out front of China in the global discussion on climate change. Furthermore, added Tharoor, India must grow its economy in order to alleviate poverty. Ambassador Roemer assured Tharoor that was a shared priority and cited Secretary Clinton's recent statements and visit. They agreed to work together to identify common interests at Copenhagen. Ambassador Roemer asked what type of signal the U.S. might see from PM Singh. Tharoor said it was too early to say but the GOI was looking for solutions.

Deliverables for Upcoming Visits

¶12. (C) Ambassador Roemer noted that there were several outstanding issues on civilian nuclear cooperation: public declaration of reactor park sites, declaration of safeguarded facilities to the IAEA, civil nuclear liability legislation, Part 810 license assurances, and the ongoing reprocessing consultations. Tharoor assured the ambassador that all of these issues were in the right hands and that the GOI was aware of the PM's visit to Washington as a deadline for action.

¶13. (C) Tharoor inquired about progress on opening Indian consulates in Seattle and Atlanta. Ambassador Roemer indicated that it could be a positive development if issues surrounding the new Indian consulates as well as building permits for the U.S. consulate in Mumbai could be solved for the PM's visit. He noted that the Mumbai situation with building permits being delayed had been long and costly. (Comment: This is the second time in two high level meetings that the GOI has directly asked for help on the consulate issue for the PM's visit. From a strategic negotiating perspective, this issue might take the same amount of time to resolve as the negotiations on the five remaining civilian nuclear issues important to the U.S. End Comment.)

Comment

¶14. (C) Tharoor does not have direct responsibility for Indo-U.S. ties, but will be a valuable interlocutor because of his high-profile UN background, GOI connections, and the significant amount of time he has spent living and working in

the U.S. He is increasingly becoming the face of the MEA given EAM Krishna's underwhelming performance. We'll continue to reach out to Tharoor and engage him on a wide array of topics of mutual interest, including UN cooperation, climate change, and nonproliferation. END COMMENT.
ROEMER